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Minority Rights as Human Rights: Hegemonic Media Representation of Minority Groups in Pakistan

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Abstract: *Minority Rights have been considered important in every nation and in every age. The Present research is conducted to study the situation of media representation of minorities and their rights in Pakistan and content analysis of news reports of GEO News Channel of Pakistan during the period from January, 2013 to March, 2013. The objective of this descriptive and analytical study is to explore the positive / negative role of popular media in the protection or violation of Minority Rights in Pakistan. The technique of systematic sampling is used. By Using SPSS the descriptive method was used to represent the findings of the research the relationship among the data collected was also explored through statistical methods. The hypothesis about these phenomenon and linkages among them were tested through chi-square test. The findings of the study reveal that the most popular news network of Pakistan portrays the minority rights issues in a biased way and usually give a very little space to the issues of minorities in their daily news broadcast. A detailed discussion about the findings, demographic variable, acceptance and rejection of hypothesis was made in the relevant portion of the study after concluding it.*

Keywords: Minority Rights, Human Rights, Media, Violation, Protection.

I. Introduction

Rights of minorities have always been one of the most complex and debatable issue and dilemma of human civilization from the beginning of history and especially from the start of this century. In spite of media boom, globalization, widespread education, enlightenment and constitutional guarantees which are written practically in every constitution of the world, ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural minorities are not yet free from harassment, discrimination and persecution in every corner of this world. Media representation of minority groups has always been a very imperative ground for research and also a controversial issue in community of every civilization as well [1].

Minority is defined as a group which is generally well thought-out as low graded in a state, not only numerically but also in matter of power, strength, culture and status, in contrast to the overall population in the country [2]. Some critics say that the non-dominant cluster of any state or civilization is generally the minority group of that society or country. It is in point of fact the freedom or right of every community or people of every religion to live their life, according to their own will and culture. Likewise there is no universally accepted definition of minority in international human rights law all over the world [3]. Minority rights are very important component of human rights in the discussion of Law of international justice. While [4] argues that in fact minority rights are the

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human rights because if some state guarantees the protection of human rights then naturally the minority rights are also protected as well. Moreover, it is always believed that when some state confirms the human rights in her country, then it will be ensured that it has confirmed the minority rights as well. Furthermore, [5] argues that if we could change the model of minority rights into collective rights, then the dilemma of violation of rights of minorities could be solved to some extent. Race riots are in many countries an everlasting characteristic of the political and social life of the populace. It is for this rationale that treatment of minorities is such a vital aspect of international diplomacy and virtually every deed that has been compiled in modern history contains extraordinary provisions for people who are everlastingly living in societies where they are discriminated because they hold opposing views in race and belief from the majority. Furthermore minority dilemma is not produced from the groups of diverse culture or different civilization; rather it is caused by some state policies and laws in a country [6].

As almost every country has one or more minority groups inside its terrain, characterized by their own racial, linguistic or religious beliefs, distinctive from the majority of population. Usually the rights of minorities are violated, if the national laws and legislations are not adequate to the religious freedom of the minorities [7]. Therefore laws and legislations in every country are considered as the key element of protection of rights of every citizen in any society or country. Somehow due to the hegemony of powerful and dominant group, majorities always get power over the minorities in every country.

There are a number of factors, which are responsible for the violation of minority rights, direct democracy in some countries, sometimes becomes a major cause for this because majority always rules is a universal truth [8]. Likewise minority or majority group is not important but the key element is the domination of one group over the other, either it is minority or majority [2]. Although respect for each group's identity is a great asset to the multicultural multiplicity of our global society, relations between the majority and minority as well as among different minorities.

If a group of people which is in majority does not esteem the minority then it generally causes tensions, hostility and violent behavior. To some extent there are some communal or religious values, which are accountable for imbalances in minority rights and human rights [9]. Moreover, in political or election campaigns, minority issues and rights are just used for agenda setting of different political parties [10]. While development in financial circumstances and political moderation are also responsible for giving minorities, their rights and integrity in the society [11]. Similarly meeting the aspirations of various ethnic, religious or linguistic communities and ensuring the rights of minorities considerably diminish tensions among groups and individuals and help to further participatory development, thus contributing to stability and peace.

United Nations is significantly concerned with human rights issues distressing minorities. Some issues for instance, demands for sovereignty or autonomy present a confrontation to states that is not for ever and a day resolved by eliminating prejudice. In some countries, minorities and their rights are always enduring in the lime light due to convinced poignant and insightful religious beliefs. Furthermore these discriminations are one way or another is common in the constitutional aspects of some countries as well. Likewise, violation of minority rights is not only in Asian countries but it is very obvious in European countries as well [12]. Likewise [13] analyzed the situation of minorities in Asian countries and found that Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistan as well Muslims in Sri Lanka are discriminated not only in the affair of life opportunities, but also in the case of media illustration. Many aspects of the dilemma of protection of human rights in Pakistan are inextricably linked with the position of the country's various religious, linguistic and cultural minorities. Similarly [14] found that in comparison to other Asian countries, there are more ethnic and religious majorities in Pakistan and Sri Lanka which usually are dominant on the minority groups.

Pakistan is a country where a number of different communities are living their life as minority. Christians are the major ethnic minority group and after them Hindus and some other groups such as Sikhs, Buddhists, Ahmadies/Qadianis and parsis, which are very few in number are part of minorities in the country. Minorities are given their due place in society with respect and cultural as well as religious freedom. Many aspects of the problem of safeguarding human rights in Pakistan are inextricably linked with the position of the country's various religious, linguistic and cultural minorities. To some extent many members

of these minorities have suffered violations of human rights as individuals, their minority status has in some cases at least, been an encouraging feature and the very veracity of some minorities has also undergo from direct assaults.

II. Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual framework of cultural hegemony directs towards the representation of certain social or cultural groups. In many cases on media portrayal, hegemony proves that dominant culture through some dominant or powerful group actually maintain its dominance over subordinate groups through a system of accomplishment of social, economic and political supremacy [15]. Through certain ideas or ideologies the ruling class or powerful group maintain the unjust social order and people adopt and absorb those ideas as a part of their social practices [16]. It is an obvious fact that racial thinking and institutionalized racism are one of the main causes of under-representation of ethnic minorities on media rather it is the hegemony of ethnic minority or dominance of power group, which is the root cause of all this. In the form of prevailing state policies and socio-political strategies the minorities are always under-represented. As main aim of media groups is to make profit and get financial benefits therefore they support the policies of majority or dominant class in the society. Therefore for the sake of earning profit the news genre is also portrayed and represented in favor of that dominant group which actually helps it in getting more advertisements. Moreover it is also the hegemony of dominant commercial group which is involved in the under-representation of minorities [17]. Furthermore, the rights of ethnic minorities have always been the debatable issue all over the world [18]. All over the world the ethnic minorities have to face certain kind of discrimination in the case of either rights or media representation.

[19] defines ethnic minorities as

"A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members- being nationals of the State- possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language."

The main characteristic of ethnic minority is that it is actually the class which is less numerically and less powerful as compared to the group of ethnic majority, which is dominant and powerful. While to some other school of thought, it is not the matter of numbers because in some countries the group of inferior number is considered dominant [20]. Therefore it is the matter of power and supremacy which sometimes identifies a numerically weak ethnic group as the dominant group which later get approval of its certain policies through hegemonic strategies and control over the subordinate group. Hegemony helps the dominant group or ruling class to have effective and acceptable governance. Hegemonic theory supports the ability of one social class to control or rule over the other social class. Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1971) which refers to the dominance of powerful group over the submissive group which identifies the supremacy and hegemony of strong majority over the submissive minority[21]. In case of religious or ethnic minorities the domination of cultural hegemony of power class or ruling class could be seen prominently. Therefore the hegemony of ruling class decides that where all the other subordinate classes have to stand in media portrayal, either inside the media margins or outside the media margins.

Hegemony and power are considered important in deciding the media content in different genres in television. Media construct the reality in such a manner, which support the dominant ideology and very personal interests of powerful group or its owner. The media portrayal of minorities should also have to be on the basis of equality but sometime sympathetic portrayal of ethnic minorities looks very common on most of channels on television rather than positive and equal to other races. Rather the media portrayal of minorities should have to be favorably on equality basis.

According to Universal declaration, "All the human beings are created equal." In democratic countries, it is the moral duty of the ruling government to give equal rights, opportunities and equal representation to every person in the country [22]. Therefore as freedom of expression is the basic and Universal right of every human being to express himself and to have equal representation of his opinions and thoughts, so ethnic minorities should have to be represented on media equally to every other human

being in a country. Likewise it is also important for equality of rights that all the ethnic minorities should have equal chance of representation and media portrayal.

Therefore to some extent it is the responsibility of state to protect the minority rights. Especially in the ethnic or religious states, this issue has always been in debate, not only in public but also in media of that country. Therefore it is considered the responsibility of not only the government but also the media as well to give proper projection to the violation of rights of minority groups. Pakistan is one of those countries which really has played a very important role in the elimination of laws of inequality on any ground of religion, gender or racial discrimination [23].

The constitution of Pakistan,1973 and International Covenant are two major proof of all this. Pakistan has always guaranteed equal rights to minorities as human rights.

Media in Pakistan is considered as one of the key player in the protection of human rights on the basis of equality and justice. Likewise, it is also playing a little bit biased role in the reporting of issues related to religious minorities.

According to the importance of Minority rights in every community and every society, this research paper is going to study the news reports of Geo News, which is considered as one of the most popular channel in Pakistan.

III. Constitutional Provisions for Minority Rights in Pakistan

Despite Pakistan's overwhelming Muslim majority, the religious freedom of all of its citizens should be safeguarded is reflected in a number of constitutional provisions of the Constitution of Islamic republic of Pakistan, 1973. Although Islam is the state religion but equality of rights of minorities has always been guaranteed in all the matters and organizations of the country. Although Islam is the state religion but according to different articles of Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

(Article.2) states

"Everyone has the right to profess his religions and religious denominations and sects have the right to establish, maintain and manage their religious institutions."

Moreover according to (Article.20)

"No one can be compelled to pay taxes in support of religions other than his own."

Likewise (Article.21) states

"There is to be freedom of religious education both as regards its provision and its receipt."

Similarly (Article.22) identifies

"There is a guarantee of equality before the law."

Additionally (Article.25) further states

"And a prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion."

Furthermore, the article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil Rights and Political Rights (ICCPR) also states:

"In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of the group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language".

Moreover, the same was produced in the Declaration on the Rights of National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities (UNDM), which was later accepted and adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992. Every Constitution and every religion speaks in favor of minority rights but very few actually practice them.

Hypothesis of the Study

H1: Geo News gives equal coverage to the issues of minority rights as human rights.

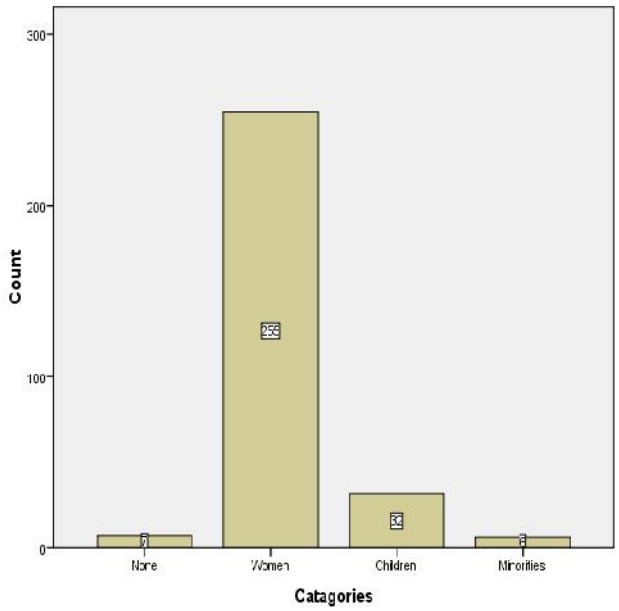
IV. Data Analysis

The content analysis of broadcasted news reports, during the period of January, 2013 to March, 2013, was done. In which the number of news reports of violation of minority rights with comparison to overall reports of human rights are analyzed. All the news reports from 07-09am and 07-09pm are recorded and analyzed.

Table: 01. Different category of Human Rights reported/broadcasted on the "Geo News" channel from January, 2013 to March, 2013.

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	7	2.3	2.3
Women	255	85.0	87.3
Children	32	10.7	98.0
Minorities	06	2.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

Figure # 01



Explanation:

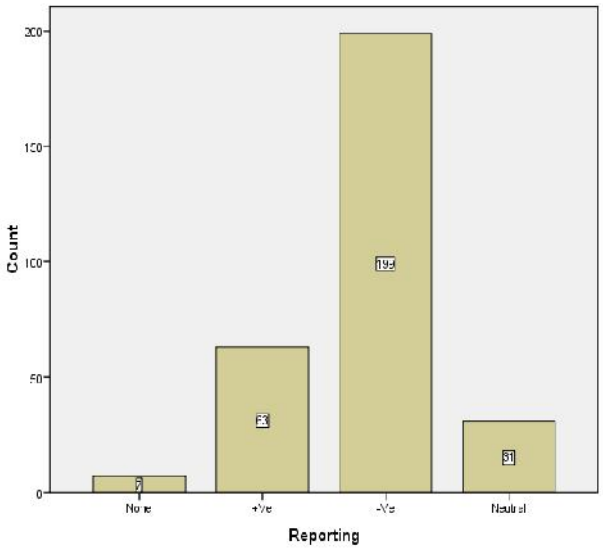
Figure indicates all the categories of reports about the human rights in the "Geo News" during the selected period. The bars show that among all the news reports about human rights, the 255 reports about the women, 32 reports about the children while only05 reports are about the minorities and the remaining 07 bulletins have no reports about the minority rights or human rights. If we compare all the categories of the human rights then we reach on the result that mostly repeated reports are about the women and least number of reports is about minorities.

The figure shows all the categories of reports about the minority rights in "Geo News". The diagram indicates that the 85% reports about the women, about 11% reports about the children and the 2% reports about the minorities and the remaining 2% have nothing about the human rights. If we compare all the categories of the human rights then we reach on the result that mostly repeated reports are about the women and least number of news are broadcasted about the rights of minorities.

Table.03. Reporting of Minority Rights issues in "Geo News" from January, 2013 to March, 2013.

Reporting	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	7	2.3	2.3	2.3
Positive	63	21.0	21.0	23.3
Negative	199	66.3	66.3	89.7
Neutral	31	10.3	10.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Figure.03



Explanation:

This figure indicates the reporting criteria of news about the minority rights in the "Geo News". The diagram shows that 199 reports are negatively reported, 63 reports are positively reported, 31 reports are neutral and the remaining 7 have nothing about the reporting decision about minority rights. If we compare all the reporting signs about the minority rights then mostly reports are negatively reported.

Testing for association b/w the attributes of categories and reporting of the Geo News from January 2013 to March 2013.

This test is performed to check the association between categories and reporting of the "Geo News" during the selected period. We checked the association among the attributes characterized. This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used to check the association. The cross table of the categories and their reporting are given as below.

Table: 4.

Categories		Reporting				Total
		None	Positive	Negative	Neutral	
	General	6	0	1	0	7
	Women	1	58	165	31	255
	Children	0	4	28	0	32
	Minorities	0	1	5	0	6
Total		7	63	199	31	300

This table indicates the relationship among the attributes of the categories of minority rights and their reporting's. Only 06 news bulletins from the total 300 regarding human rights among which mostly contain the news reports about the different issues of violation of rights of women which are the 85%. While for minorities only 0.1% news reports were positively reported and mostly were negatively reported. From the total of 06 reports about the minorities only 01 news report was positively reported and 05 were negatively reported which is 90%. When we apply the chi-square test then we see that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance (Chi Square = 2.27).

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is observed that all the categories of reports about the minority rights among all the reports of human rights in "Geo News" indicates that the 85% reports about the women, about 11% reports about the children and the 2% reports about the minorities and the remaining 2% have nothing about the human rights. If we compare all the categories of the human rights then we reach on the conclusion that mostly repeated reports are about the women. And very few are about the rights of minorities.

Revealed Elements of Minority Rights as Human Rights

1. The Right to exist or survive:

Just like human rights for everyone, minorities also have the similar right to life and to survive in the society. Furthermore it is the responsibility of every government to provide equal opportunities of life, so that every human being could also live a life of a human being with all those rights which a human being deserves in the society. Therefore state should have to guarantee complete security of life, property and self-respect to the minorities as well.

2. The Right to non-discrimination:

It is also a basic right of all the minorities to have protection from any kind of direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of ethnic, linguistic or cultural identity. Even all the treaties and charters of Human Rights in United Nation also include this right on one of its priorities in the basic rights. For the sake of fundamental rights and freedom in the society, the right of non-discrimination has always been the most important element in the history of minority rights. Therefore governments or States should have to take proper actions for social, economic and cultural freedom or survival of minorities on non-discriminatory grounds.

3. The right to protection of identity:

Protection of the right of Identity is also a very important and basic right of every human being in this world. Therefore it should be safeguarded by the government or state. So that every community among the minorities should have the full freedom to practice their religion, language as well as culture freely in the public and also in the private spheres. In every country all the minorities should have the right to develop their culture and religion among the other communities with freedom.

4. The Right to Participation in public affairs:

For better life opportunities and survival, it is also one of the basic right or key element in minority rights that minorities should have to be allowed for complete and free participation in the decision-making in public affairs. Usually the minorities are not given this right, even for the affairs which are regarding to their matters or rights at all. It is also a basic right of minority group to have representatives of their own, who could fight or represent them for their rights. This

could be said in other terms as political empowerment of minorities in the country or among the majority, which in particular could also be practiced as legislative, executive and as administrative power as well. Every human right association as well United Nation also ensures it essential for cultural development, peace, security and satisfactory environment in any country.

To some extent it is believed and understood that minority rights are actually the exclusive rights which are usually provided to some particular ethnic group. Minority rights as women's rights, refugees' rights and the rights of the disabled are about ensuring that a vulnerable group does not suffer from unequal implementation of rights.

At the end of this detailed study of situation of minority rights in the news reports of Geo News which is considered as the most popular news network of Pakistan, it is concluded that due to hegemony of some religious pressures, economic interests and social reasons, a very few news reports, regarding the rights and issues of ethnic minorities in Pakistan are broadcasted. Furthermore the few which are somehow broadcasted are usually projected in a very negative manner. Media in Pakistan is also playing a little bit biased role in the reporting of issues related to religious minorities. Therefore it is recommended on the humanitarian grounds that every media in the world should have to give proper justified space to the rights of minorities. The minority groups are also human beings therefore they should also have to be represented equally on media all over the world. The problems and issues of ethnic minorities should have to be highlighted in different media programs. The festivals and religious events of all the minority groups should also have to be celebrated on media with their deserving social values in the society. The achievements and good deeds of every minority group should have to be given equal time and place as the importance is given to the majorities.

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